

Animals go about their world sensing, processing that sensing, and acting. Action that has sensing and sensory-processing underlying it is behavior. Animals are always on the lookout for other entities in their surroundings that are exhibiting behavior because such entities could be predators, prey, or mates and these things matter in a big way when you are an animal. Hence animals are wired to parse their world for other animals and are receptive at birth and through tuning of their innate neuro-sensory equipment to slews of behaviors made up of myriad gestures, stances, and implicit goals. Humans are no exception, although a large share of our behavior is coded in culture and not in our genes.

My primary interest is in making objects whose behavior is the main stimulus to observing animals, including humans. This can be augmented by form and other elements but is primarily achieved through gesture, reaction, and a sense of agency. Although the targets of some of my object's behavioral signaling are non-human animals, and sometimes other behavioral objects, the human observer always is in the mix in the way they are when they watch squirrels flicking their tails at each other and parse the behavior in a human manner even if the intended meaning of the signals is reserved for other squirrels. Some of my behavioral objects are directly intended for humans and borrow their gestures and forms from aspects of our culture that I feel resonate in peculiar ways with our behavior lattices.

The making of behavioral objects relies heavily on the branch of technology known as robotics. Indeed, the robot is more than just a technology, it is a ancient concept that, by one name or another, has always existed at the intersection of the truly make-able and the only imaginable. Any behavioral object IS a robot and, through intent or accident, steps into that intersection. At least in part, every robot is an animal/human simulacrum, not to the degree it looks like known animals or humans but because it is a tangible creation of artifice that senses, processes what is sensed, uses the result of that sensing to take physical action upon the world, and, in doing all of this, evokes in the mind of the human beholder a perception of mindful intent. It is this semblance of mindful intent in an observer's head that is the core medium of a maker of behavioral objects. Moreover, because these objects share the physical plane with the observer, the behavior is perceived as the object's "real" behavior whereas, for example, a computer-graphical agent that exhibits mindful intent is in all ways representative, even behaviorally.

Unlike animals, behavioral objects are unfettered by the requirements of growth or adaptation and can take forms and behaviors that suit human desires, align with animal's instinctual behavioral patterns, or eschew both for the potential whims of the objects themselves. For a period, I made objects that related to natural habitats and themselves in animal ways, often amalgamating found animal parts like feathers and eggshells. Then I spent some time making behavioral entities out of human products that seemed to want to have behavior, often some of the least clearly useful material artifacts of our culture - the As-Seen-On-TV's, the brand-imprinted promotional items, the one-use sport spirit tokens and their ilk. Then, I decided to focus on the perspective of my robots themselves and make some behavioral sculptures that were pretending that they were living out their own fantasies - mostly the fantasy of doing what the stars of the robot world do: going to other celestial bodies and looking for life. Now, I am moving my work back into wilder places and trying to explore the unhumanness of animal minds by making objects with bodies, gestures, and behaviors tuned to given animal species' particular signaling pathways and focuses.